C A M B O D I A

March 1974 I arrived in Cambodia. On my way out of Laos, and on my way to Washington, I had a long meeting with Tom Enders in Bangkok. Tom had been Chargé d' affaires in Phnom Penh and had done an excellent job. His briefing was useful. I respected Tom Enders. The media tried to give Tom a bad reputation, but the professionals knew better. Enders went on to become ambassador to many countries. He was also Assistant Secretary for Latin America where he was again criticized by the media. Later on, I used to get phone calls from the press or pundits inviting me to criticize Tom Ender's role in Cambodia. I did not comply. Most authors who have written about Cambodia did not know that Enders also tried to find negotiated solutions in Cambodia. He was way too intelligent a man not to see the problems ahead. As DCM or Charge, his recommendations to seek a negotiated solution also were not accepted, except that his recommendations were made in 1972 or 1973 when a negotiated solution was easier to implement. When I passed the confirmation hearings to be Ambassador to Cambodia, I flew commercially to Hong Kong, and from there, by a small U.S. Government jet, to Phnom Penh.

Since I had been to Cambodia before, I knew the important role Sihanouk Norodom had played in his country. I respected Sihanouk, and even liked him,

for his efforts to defend his people against all outsiders.

Q: Was he the King at that point?

DEAN: He was at that point Prince Sihanouk and resided in exile in Beijing. About 800 or 900 years ago, a Chinese envoy was sent to the court of the Khmer kingdom, and he wrote the first report about Angkor Wat. At the time, Cambodia was the vassal of China. Over centuries, as the Khmer kingdom lost power, Vietnam and Thailand tried to control what was left of Cambodia. Both the Thais and the Vietnamese had come originally from southern China and in their migration southward occupied certain areas which had been settled by the Khmers. In the early part of the 19th century, the Emperor of Annam even placed a viceroy on the throne in Phnom Penh. The Thais also had their eye on the Khmer provinces west of the Mekong, the rich areas of Battambang. Parts of Thailand and Vietnam had originally been part of the Khmer Empire. Hence, in the latter part of the 19th century, the Cambodians were quite willing to accept the far away rule of France. The French obviously had their own agenda in Cambodia, but in the 20th century they supported the Cambodian desire to remain outside the Thai or Vietnamese orbit. It was in 1941 that Sihanouk Norodom was selected by the French to take the throne. Sihanouk was only 18 years old at that tine. The French preferred Sihanouk to a Sissavong who had a better claim on the throne but was less pliable and older than Sihanouk. Sihanouk was schooled by French advisers. He really was a popular ruler and many rural folks in Cambodia looked up to him not only as a ruler, but as an intermediary between them and their gods.

Perhaps I should add that when I arrived in Phnom Penh in 1974 I knew that Sihanouk had had a problem with the CIA. Back in the 1960s,

Sihanouk had written a book "My War with the CIA". My former boss and friend, Randolph Kidder, was never allowed to present credentials to Sihanouk and hence, never served as U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia, although appointed to the job around 1966. Some people say this was the nefarious role of the French advisers who kept out the Americans. I did not see Cambodia – I still don't see Cambodia – in this way. The Cambodians saw the French for what they were, a colonial power with interests to play their "rôle civilisateur" (civilizing role), but also, the French dominant foreign role happened to fit the interests of the Cambodians. In 1966, some Khmer officials left the Royal Khmer Government and disappeared into the bush. They became the leaders of what became the "Khmer Rouge". They were critical of Sihanouk's way of ruling Cambodia. In 1970 when Long Nol and Sirit Matak overthrew Sihanouk, the latter was in France completing a medical tune-up in Grasse. Sihanouk first went to Moscow, and after a few days flew to Beijing where he remained for the duration of the war, until 1975. Hence, from 1970 onward, he saw the American support for Long Nol and Sirit Matak as a revolt against him. If you believe in democracy, there is no doubt that Sihanouk basically had the support of the ordinary people of Cambodia. Perhaps some of the better educated people were aware of Sihanouk's shortcomings. In 1970, the revolt which brought Long Nol and Sirit Matak to power made the United States, in Sihanouk's eyes, an adversary because he blamed the U.S. for supporting the coup against him in Phnom Penh. One must remember that at the beginning of the American intervention in Vietnam, Sihanouk had proclaimed Cambodia a neutral country. The U.S. considered the Ho Chi Minh Trail, on the extreme eastern border of Cambodia, to be part of the Vietnamese theater of operations. There is little doubt that the North Vietnamese used the trail inside Cambodian territory to move

their equipment into South Vietnam in order to come into South Vietnam as protected as possible and to attack the South Vietnamese army from the west. That led to a policy decision by the United States to bomb the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail had preceded King Sihanouk's departure from the scene in 1970. He did not approve of the bombing, but he did not object, which was good enough for the American position. It led, however, to what we called American incursions into an area of Cambodia known as "the parrot beak". We used American ground forces for these incursions into a country which was avowedly neutral and where the ruler had been one of the founders of the Bandung Conference of Non-Aligned Nations. Cambodia was not in the same category as Vietnam. Sihanouk must be today the last survivor of the Bandung Non-Aligned Conference. After the 1970 coup in Phnom Penh, American bombing was then extended beyond the Ho Chi Minh Trail. At that point, American bombing was in support of the government which the Cambodians themselves established in the absence of Sihanouk in Beijing.

Long Nol and Sirit Matak were very different people from Sihanouk. The atmosphere had changed. Cambodia was now a war zone. I presented credentials to President Long Nol not in a government palace but in a military camp which looked like a Foreign Legion outpost with barbed wire and fencing all around it. Long Nol was a likeable man, but he had already had a stroke by the time I arrived. He was hence slightly handicapped and used a cane for walking. For a military man. his physical handicap must have bothered him psychologically. The credentials ceremony started a relationship where I would see the Chief of State very often. Many of my contacts with him were devoted to trying to help him correct. some of the shortcomings of the administration in the country. Long Nol

lived in a modest villa. His partner in the overthrow of Sihanouk, Prince Sirit Matak, who was Sihanouk Norodom's uncle, was no longer active in the government. When I got to Cambodia in March 1974, I called on him in his very elegant home and found him easier to work with than Long Nol. Sirit Matak spoke flawless French. He had been Ambassador to Japan, and was more of a cultured aristocrat than a military leader. We maintained a close relationship to the very end when I tried to evacuate him. He wrote this heart-wrenching letter which was read by the President of the United States to the American Congress in order to obtain funds for south east Asia.

Above all, I had a wonderful staff of 200 Americans, the number authorized as the ceiling for my staff. Some of them had their wives with them.

Q: Your wife was with you?

DEAN: My wife was with me. At the end of our struggle, about end of February 1975, I had to order all wives out of the country. The military situation in Phnom Penh had become too precarious. They were evacuated to a U.S. military installation in Thailand, awaiting the denouement of the war. Congress had mandated that at no time more than 200 Americans could serve in Cambodia. This excluded wives. It meant that at the end of each day, I could not have more than 200 people physically present in Cambodia. Hence, if people came in from the outside, from Washington or from CINCPAC (the headquarters of the United States Navy in the Pacific in Hawaii), I would have to order other people to take the plane to go over to Thailand and wait until the visitors had left. I applied the spirit and the letter of Congress mandate. The longer I stayed, the more I realized that most of the country was no longer in the hands of the Long Nol and Sirit Matak regime. By 1974, Cambodia looked like a

leopard skin with the Long Nol government only controlling enclaves, most of them linked to an urban center. Much of the countryside was held and controlled at night by the Khmer Rouge.

Permit me to broach a subject where I have doubts and where there is room for many different interpretations... The American bombings from the air of Cambodian areas far away from the Ho Chi Minh Trail were justified by us on the basis that they were under the control of the Khmer Rouge and hence against the Long Nol regime we supported. But those of us in Cambodia already then realized that these bombings created a great under-current of anti-Americanism among poorly educated farmers who only had to worry about survival. They then became easy prey for the Khmer Rouge to be recruited into their forces. They did not quite understand why they were being hurt. Did our policies of open support for a rebellious regime against Prince Sihanouk, the legal ruler of Cambodia, help the Khmer Rouge recruitment policy? Who were Long Nol's allies, in addition to the U.S : the Thais, and South Vietnam — both countries who were feared by the average Cambodian. What about Cambodia's earlier declarations of neutrality? Nobody really respected that self-proclaimed neutrality of Cambodia. Neither the Long Nol regime, nor the Khmer Rouge, nor any of those countries supporting either side. But I am inclined to believe that all these factors helped the recruitment policy of the Khmer Rouge who made nationalism one of their central themes. That the Khmer Rouge were brutal, inhuman, and committed acts against humanity, everybody knew that, and during our tenure there we documented some of these events. The press went to see the various sites where the Khmer Rouge had committed these atrocities against their own people, in the years 1974 and 1975.

Q: You mean that it was already well-known, documented, how they were operating?

DEAN: That's right. We knew that the Khmer Rouge were ruthless butchers, and we had sent to Washington documented examples of their brutalities. The regime of Long Nol had some good generals who fought well. They also had corruption, soldiers not being paid, shortages of ammunition, etc... The job of our team of 200 military and civilians was to help and assist the Long Nol regime in rectifying some of the shortcomings so they could withstand the Khmer Rouge military attacks.

Q: Could you give me some names of the embassy staff and maybe your military?

DEAN: One of the finest military officers I had was Brigadier General Jack Palmer, who is dead. Jack was a dedicated military officer, with an able, beautiful wife who also worked with the wives of some of the senior Cambodian military officers. I remember him in one of the most difficult moments of his life. We were beginning the evacuation, on April 12, 1975, when he received a phone call from the Cambodian General in charge of the aviation who said: "Jack, are you evacuating and leaving us alone here?" Jack Palmer had to waffle his reply (i.e. deny) in order to ensure that the evacuation would go smoothly, but his relationship with the Cambodian General was one of honor and friendship and lying in the interest of the security of the American evacuation must have hurt. I remember seeing him as he answered that phone call. Our staff, both military and civilian, worked every day for well over 8 hours a day. All members of our staff were committed to doing their best to help the Cambodian Government to withstand the Khmer Rouge and keep on fighting. I owe a particular debt to my deputy, Robert V. Keely, who got to be ambassador in three different countries and was a particularly well-known

figure for his straight and honest stand in Greece. If our evacuation from Cambodia went so smoothly at the end, it is to his credit. We have remained friends ever since Mali where we first met in 1960. Keeley had been my choice for the position of Deputy Chief of Mission. Jim Engle had been in Phnom Penh in this slot, but he did not stay very long. Robert Keeley is a thoroughly fair-minded and honest man, one of the ablest drafters in the Foreign Service. While at times we differed and discussed matters, I usually ended up listening to him. The Chief of USIA was another great person. From time to time, I briefed myself the 20-30 accredited journalists on the state of play in Cambodia.

Early on in my tenure, I tried to find a person who could do for me in Cambodia what I was able to do in Laos to find a negotiated "controlled" solution. My orders when I had left Dr. Kissinger were: "John, you go there and fight and help the Khmers to withstand the communists efforts to control the country. Don't get yourself involved in political solutions." While I had these instructions from the Secretary of State, in early 1974 I received word from various sources regarding efforts by the Romanians to act as intermediaries. Every time I heard about possible intermediaries for negotiations, I would talk with my fellow Harvard graduate Sidney Shanberg. He later wrote a book which was made into a movie "The Killing Fields". As a matter of fact, Sidney often wrote stories from Phnom Penh which tried to support my penchant for a "controlled solution". At one point, I had told him: "You know, I understand the Khmer Rouge have a list of eight Cambodian leaders who have to be removed from power before they are willing to come to the negotiating table. I would personally urge all eight of them to leave Cambodia, if this would get both sides to the negotiating table." Well,

I did not know when I was on the record and when I was off the record. The NEW YORK TIMES printed my offer on its front page. Sidney was never unfriendly. The questions he asked -- "What are you doing on the negotiations? How do you see the situation today?" -- were usually designed to advance my idea of a "controlled solution". At one point, he said on television, years later, "Kissinger shot the dove off Dean's shoulder". As for my messages to Washington, some people accused me of getting perhaps a little shrill. My leitmotif remained: "Time is not on our side. We must find a controlled solution. Otherwise, there will be a bloodbath". The newspapers printed it. THE ECONOMIST printed the same message a few weeks before we left Phnom Penh.

Q: Did you find that the State Department was leaking like mad?

DEAN: No. Very honestly speaking, we were in Cambodia and we really did not have the time to focus on how Washington handled our messages. We were living in a beleaguered city. We spoke to the press and we did not mind saying things the way we saw the situation. Miss Elizabeth Becker, the WASHINGTON POST freelancer, a lovely young lady and a highly motivated person, was in Cambodia in my days but she did not see the Khmer Rouge in 1974 or 1975 in the same light as we did. We saw the Khmer Rouge as a bunch of butchers. We could not turn over a nation of 7 million people to these butchers. Some of our critics in those days saw the Khmer Rouge as "agrarian reformers", and that was how they tried to depict themselves. The international and American press was not on our side at that time. We were perceived as trying to hold on and impose our will against these "agrarian nationalists" who were opposing the "corrupt, imposed regime of Long Nol".

Q- For the researcher in the future, I hope they will go back to the files of the '^Washington Post", the "New York Times", and other newspapers

and magazines to see how this whole period, 1974-1975, was being reported. Was there any place to negotiate? This seems sort of amorphous.

DEAN: This is exactly the position Dr. Kissinger explains in his book which was published in June of 1999. He claims there was nobody to negotiate with in Phnom Penh. Let me explain what I meant by a "controlled solution". A controlled solution is that if you have the desire to find a negotiated controlled solution, you can find it. It may be a bad one. But my position, starting in 1974, and it got shriller and shriller as we came towards April of 1975, was that a bad solution is better than a human tragedy. The world is not white or black. It very often can be very dark grey. But at least, it would not lead to turning defenseless Khmers over to the Khmer Rouge. The argument you will find in all our messages was always the same: there is still a pro-government army, a fairly efficient navy, and a fledgling air force fighting on the side of Long Nol. In addition to the military, a group of hard working, well-educated Cambodians who understood the danger of a Khmer Rouge take-over, remained in Phnom Penh. A civilian administration remained in place - perhaps not always efficient - but it was there. Hence, we had something to negotiate with. When the other side takes over and there is nobody to negotiate with because they are all gone – the army, navy, air force, civilians – it is a simple take-over; it's a defeat and it leaves all power exclusively in the hands of the victors. In my vision, the man who undoubtedly enjoyed the most support in Cambodia remained Prince Sihanouk, even when he was in exile in Beljing. I tried to get him involved in a search for a compromise solution. I urged that we try Malaysians as intermediaries. The Malaysians offered themselves for this mission. The Indonesians offered themselves. The French were always there, willing to find an alternative solution to fighting until the end. Whatever a "controlled solution" entailed, it

would have been contrary to what we had tried to achieve by the policy pursued by Washington. I felt in Phnom Penh that we could not just walk away from our responsibilities to the Cambodian people. But, that appeared to me more and more a possibility.

Q: How about Congress?

DEAN: The reason I began to plan for an eventual closing of the American Mission to Cambodia was that Congress was debating the reduction or elimination of funds to support the struggle against the Khmer Rouge. We had no idea whether new funds would be voted for Cambodia, just to finish the fiscal year, or for the new fiscal year. In January 1975, I went on American and international television and pleaded: "Don't walk out on the Cambodian people, but rather give us the necessary funds so that we can keep going to gain time to find a "negotiated solution". There were Senators in Congress who agreed with my position. In fact, there was a move in Congress to vote an additional $122 million for the period March-April to the end of June 1975. but during this period a negotiated solution should be found. Dr. Kissinger did not testify before Congress on this issue. He sent his Deputy. Perhaps he disapproved of this approach. Personally, I felt that even if we were dealt a poor hand, (perhaps no more funding), I still had to find a solution. I could not just turn over the Cambodian people to what we knew was a ruthless regime. Our messages from Phnom Penh were crystal clear: if the Khmer Rouge take control of the country, there was going to be a bloodbath. The exact word was "bloodbath". It turned out to be even worse: a genocide. Determined to find a controlled solution, I wrote through the French Embassy in Phnom Penh letters to my friend Etienne Manac'h who was at

that time French Ambassador in Beijing. He brought about the meeting in Martinique in December 1974 of President Gerald Ford with the President of France, Giscard d'Estaing. They issued an invitation to Prince Sihanouk to return to Phnom Penh and head a coalition government representing the two Cambodian sides. Sihanouk at that time was the Head of the Khmer Rouge Government in exile. Probably Sihanouk was only the nominal head, but his name meant so much not only inside Cambodia but also on the international scene that his involvement would assure the success of this effort. To convey the invitation, the French sent an ambassador to Beijing but the Chinese authorities would not give him a visa. Sihanouk answered that the offer came too late and that he could not return to Phnom Penh. Was he a free agent at the time? I don't know. Did he really feel it was too late, that he saw the handwriting on the wall? He turned down the offer. I would like to say, the fact that the President of the United States did go to Martinique for this meeting and helped in issuing this invitation, showed there was in the United States some support for the effort not to leave Cambodia in an uncontrolled situation.

Q: You have these orders from Kissinger to fight the war. The reports going back were that the war was unwinnable. Your letters to Manac' h and others…

DEAN: The idea of working with the French may have been anathema to some elements in Washington. I was grasping at any straw. Whoever offered to help search for a solution, I passed it on to Washington. At the end, I got a message saying -- and it is also in the most recent book of Dr. Kissinger -- that there was a feeling in Washington that I was doing this for the record rather than really believing in it. I think Dr. Kissinger himself knocks down this thesis. Personally, I was not interested whether it would make the American negotiators look strong or weak, politically

correct or incorrect, but as long as I had something to negotiate with, I was trying to find a "controlled solution".

Q: At this point, it was not as though we were going to win the war. If you are not going to win the war, you either negotiate or you go down the tubes.

DEAN: Cambodia always was a side show. The big show was Vietnam. In 1974 the Vietnamese were still holding. It was only in 1975 that the South Vietnamese military really began to crumble badly. On January 1. 1975, I went by helicopter to look at the military situation in Batambang Province, the western province, adjoining Thailand. The Cambodian authorities admitted that the situation was not good. Visiting a buddhist monastery in an out-of-the-way densely wooded site, I came across some magnificent ruins of a Khmer temple at least 1,000 years old. This antique site was not on anybody's map at the time. I felt like some of the early western travellers who first saw the Khmer ruins in the 19th century. I then went to the pagoda to bring rice to the monks. They took me outside in the back of their pagoda. There, in the ground, was a huge fabulous Cambodian sculpture, I would say 1.200 years old. The sculpture was so enormous – it was a four-face Cambodian sculpture, and only one side was easily visible – that a crane would be needed to lift it out of the ground. Fortunately, such earth moving equipment was not available at the time and the art piece stayed in the ground. I then rushed back to Phnom Penh because I had been alerted by radio that the Khmer Rouge offensive had started in earnest. It was January 1st, 1975.

One of the people who was indispensable in our effort to resist the enemy's offensive was Richard Armitage, an Annapolis graduate, later Secretary of the Army and today Deputy Secretary of State. He was in charge of helping

the barge convoys up the Mekong River from Saigon to reach safely Phnom Penh. These barges brought essential ammunition, rice, and other equipment. When the Khmer Rouge began to dig into the banks of the Mekong River in order to interdict the transport by river of essential items, we needed Armitage to help us. The Khmer Rouge were shooting at the river convoys from eye level. If there was ammunition on it, just one shot, and the entire cargo would blow up. Armitage thought of the idea of putting metallic armor around these barges so that the bullets would not penetrate the cargo. At that point, the Khmer Rouge found different kinds of rocket launchers which would go up into the air and drop into the barges.

Q: Sort of like a mortar.

DEAN: Like a mortar. When mortars were used, the armored shields were not of much help. At that point. General Jack Palmer, my Military Adviser, came to see me. He said: "John, we can't get rid of the Khmer Rouge dug in the sides of the Mekong River. Regular aerial bombing won't do the job. Could we authorize the Cambodian Air Force to use "lazy dog" grenades?" "What is a 'lazy dog?" I asked. "It is a grenade dropped from the sky which explodes about six to seven feet off the ground. It has a tendency to explode at a level of a person standing up. That weapon is against the Geneva Convention," Jack said. "John, we should try that explosive in order to disloge the Khmer Rouge so that we can get the river convoys through again - otherwise, we would have a huge problem of getting the necessary ammunition and food in sufficient quantities to those Cambodian areas holding out against the Khmer Rouge." I went into my office and reflected on the idea. I decided I would not ask Washington for advice. I had learned from General Abrams and General Wyant that I was in charge, And I had to make the decision. I knew that if I would refer the matter back to Washington, they would have had a tough time putting an affirmative

reply in writing. (For once, perhaps Washington was happy that I did not put "the monkey on their back".)

Q: I am surprised - I mean, we have daisy cutters, and all this sort of thing - that are against...

DEAN: Allegedly, this weapon is against the Geneva Convention — which we had signed. Nevertheless, I gave the instruction to use it. I remembered the instructions that the Secretary had given me to "go and fight". We were in a war, declared or undeclared, and our job was to help the Cambodian forces to resist the Khmer Rouge. I gave the instruction to also use that weapon. But it was of no avail. The Mekong was progressively closed to our shipping going up to Phnom Penh. Therefore, our military in Washington, with the help of our military bases in Thailand, thought up an airlift like we had in Berlin, to supply by air Phnom Penh and the outlying districts under the control of the Long Nol government. Anywhere from six to eight DC-6s landed every day at the airfield in Phnom Penh bringing food and ammunition. These items were then redistributed to other areas.

Q: Was Sihanoukville open?

DEAN: Sihanoukville was open. There was severe fighting around Sihanoukville, but the road between Sihanoukville and Phnom Penh was kept open. That road is the link from Sihanoukville on the ocean, winding its way through a narrow mountain path, to Phnom Penh. It had been built by American economic assistance in the 1950s. However, the Khmer Rouge made increasingly determined efforts in early 1975 to cut the road at the mountain path and even tried to overrun the Long Nol troops at that post. Unfortunately, some of the troops had not been paid for some time and that gave rise to one of the more gruesome incidents, which I don't think is

germane to our main story.

Q: What happened?

DEAN: They did not get paid, and when the paymaster cane with the money many months later, they killed him. One of the main shortcomings of the Long Nol regime was inefficiency. In all fairness to the regime, it was difficult, when much of the countryside was in the hands of the Khmer Rouge, to get pay, food, and support to the troops on time.

Q- Let's talk a little about the military situation. What was the basic problem? Were the Viet Cong involved? Was the Khmer Rouge doing it on its own? Why were they so much more effective than the Long Nol army?

DEAN: The Khmer Rouge received strong support from the North Vietnamese, and also equipment from China. The Khmer Rouge had no transportation problem, i.e., getting supplies from North Vietnam to the areas under Khmer Rouge control. I am not sure where the Soviets stood. We had a Soviet Diplomatic Mission in Pnnom Penh. As a matter of fact, we helped to evacuate a Soviet .journalist in April 1975. The Khmer Rouge held most of the countryside at night, and certainly were also "present" during the day time. The Long Nol regime held the urban centers and small towns. In the countryside at night, the Khmer Rouge were able to move quite freely. They had no shortage of equipment. By 1974-75 more and more people had joined their ranks, by force, by conviction, or both. You must also remember that the father figure, Sihanouk, was Head of the Khmer Rouge movement and that mattered for the average, poor farmer in Cambodia. Sihanouk's role in the Khmer Rouge hierarchy was a major attraction for the average little Cambodian to ally himself with a cause headed by Prince Sihanouk. Sihanouk was a great asset to the Khmer Rouge.

Q: One hears so much about when the Khmer Rouge took over Phonm Penh that you had basically very young kids doing this.

DEAN: That's right.

Q: Were mature adults involved too?

DEAN: Yes. But the bulk of the troops which entered Phnom Penh in April 1975 after the collapse of the Long Nol regime and our departure from Cambodia, were young people, many of them from the minority hill tribes who had been recruited by the Khmer Rouge. Among the adults were also some of the most brutal thugs, including some French-educated Cambodians. Presumably idealists, they had become murderers. One of them was a graduate of Polytechnique. France's leading engineering school.

But there were also many Cambodians who honestly believed or hoped that once the Khmer Rouge had taken over, the Cambodians could settle their differences by peaceful means. For example, the Prime Minister of the Long Nol regime, Long Boret, believed that the old school "tie" of having attended the same French Lycee in Hanoi, back in the good old days, with some Khmer Rouge leaders, would help him to survive after the Khmer Rouge take-over. It was one of the great mistakes the Cambodian bourgeoisie made: that everything could be forgotten and forgiven. We knew what to expect from the Khmer Rouge and we tried to tell our contacts, especially towards the end, that a Khmer Rouge victory meant a bloodbath.

During most of my tenure, our team was sending back messages to Washington about the difficulty of supplying the Phnom Penh regime, the war weariness, and that time was not on our side. I pleaded for a "controlled solution". My Malaysian colleague agreed with that approach. So did the French. Every time I received an indication of a country trying to help us in the search of a "controlled solution", I would send a report to Washington. I understand that at some of Secretary Kisssinger's early morning briefings Dr. Kissinger would inquire: "And what have we received during the night

from Professor Dean in Phnom Penh?" He was skeptical of any effort by Embassy-Phnom Penh to find a negotiated solution.

Q: Was Pol Pot just a name, or was there contact?

DEAN: No. We had no contact whatsoever – direct or indirect – with Pol Pot. Pol Pot was merely a name. In Phnom Penh, we had contacts with Cambodians who knew other leaders of the Khmer Rouge. Also, the C.I.A. had a good idea of the make up and leadership of the Khmer Rouge. The daily briefings I received from Mr. David Whipple, C.I.A. Station Chief, helped us. He gave us documentation of some of the barbarous acts being committed by the Khmer Rouge before April 1975. We knew that the Khmer Rouge were not "agrarian reformers". In addition to the C.I.A. briefing, we also had a strictly military briefing every morning. Based on these intelligence assessments and our own impression received from travelling around the country or talking with knowledgeable Cambodians and foreigners, we continued to send message after message to Washington pleading not to abandon Cambodia to the Khmer Rouge. When in December of 1974 Sihanouk turned down the invitation of the Presidents of the United States and of France to return to Phnom Penh to find a compromise solution to the war between the two Cambodian factions, it looked as if Sihanouk was no longer a free agent and was merely being used by the Khmer Rouge for his tremendous prestige. But in earlier years, 1972-73, he might have been able to play that role. As a matter of fact, when I had finished successfully the negotiations in Laos in September of 1973, I had sent from Laos a cable to Washington in which I had suggested that the role of Souvanna Phouma in Laos could be duplicated by Sihanouk in Cambodia. After all, Sihanouk was one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement and favored a neutral position between two worlds. I never got an answer (but I still have in

my possession that cable). When Sihanouk refused to play the role of peace-maker in December 1974, I looked for other ways to avoid a tragedy. But while remaining wedded to the idea of a "controlled solution", I did all I could to shore up the Cambodian military fighting the Khmer Rouge. Positions held by the Long Nol forces received our visit. Nine Generals who fought well were rewarded. Ammunition and food were delivered and our staff made sure, to the extent possible, that the supplies reached their destination. Sometimes, some journalists misunderstood our efforts to praise and reward units who fought bravely against the Khmer Rouge. Some journalists covering the war may have misread completely the nature of the Khmer Rouge and what lay in store for the Cambodian people.

Q: Did you feel that the press in a way was exercising... I had the feeling an awful lot of the press in those days was pretty amateurish. They were all trying to make a name for themselves as being reporters. Did you have the feeling that they were trying to cut you down?

DEAN: I don't think they were trying to cut me down. They mostly thought that the U.S. was supporting a loosing cause, and perhaps some journalists were not as moved as we were at the Embassy when in April 1975 we left Cambodia by helicopter. The departure of the American staff with some Cambodians on April 12, 1975 was for most of us a dramatic moment in our lives. Dieudonnee Ten Berge, a Dutch journalist at the time in Cambodia, wrote a book entitled "The Fall of Phnom Penh". In it she describes the last few months before the fall of Phnom Penh in April 1975, as seen through her eyes and other fellow journalists. She also interviewed me in the 1990s for her book. Some observers saw me as a dove, others saw me as a militarist. One journalist, Sidney Schanberg of the New York Tines. correctly saw me as a negotiator who saw the handwriting on the wall. Little by little, reporters noted a difference in emphasis between

Dr Kissinger and myself, on how to end the Cambodian struggle. My efforts to isolate Cambodia from Vietnam — something I succeeded in doing in Laos — were unsuccessful. In Washington, the majority of the Administration saw Cambodia as part of our overall effort to stem the communist drive for control over what used to be French Indochina. In this vision, the fate of Cambodia was linked to that of Vietnam. I saw every country with its own history and past. The fact that Cambodians have no love for Vietnamese was clearly brought out by the bellicose relationship the Khmer Rouge maintained with communist Vietnam during their years in power.

At the beginning of 1975, it became apparent that the Khmer Rouge offensive meant greater expenditure of ammunition by the Long Nol forces. The closure of the Mekong River preventing the supplying of military equipment, ammunition, and food to the Cambodians by this mode of transportation also meant switching to the use of U.S. airplanes to bring these essential items to Phnom Penh and the outlying districts under Royal Khmer government control. All this implied the need of additional funding, beyond the original amounts made available for Cambodia by Congress. In short, there was not enough money to keep on going until the end of the U.S. Fiscal Year: June 30, 1975. The Cambodian military also knew that. If there was a cut-off of U.S. funds, the Cambodians would no longer have the means to fight on. There would not be any food for the people in the government controlled enclaves ammunitions would run low. Some U.S. Senators came out to see for themselves what was going on. I met with them as a group, as well as separately. I pleaded: "Give us time to find a controlled solution." But that was not the official policy of the Administration. Certain Senators, Congressmen, and staffers returned to Washington and spoke up in favor of additional funding for Cambodia. It was March 1975. Was it too late? Perhaps.

In the meantime, our Mission In Phnom Penh was in a progressively more precarious situation. The Khmer Rouge were advancing toward Phnom Penh. Perhaps our telegrams to Washington became more alarming by the day. But all members of our Mission were trying to avoid a situation where the United States would leave Cambodia with its tail between its legs and abandon an ally that we had pledged to support.

Q: Was there much contact between you and Graham Martin? How did this work out?

DEAN: Yes, there was quite a bit of contact. As we approached the closing days of our presence In Vietnam, I got the Impression from some telephone calls I received from Martin that, on certain basic issues, Ambassador Martin disagreed with top policy makers in Washington. In all fairness, the evacuation of Saigon was a much larger operation than our departure from Phnom Penh and also did not go as smoothly as ours did. I think Graham Martin was trying his best in Saigon but only came very late to the conclusion that a compromise settlement was needed. By the time he did, the North Vietnamese were at the gates of Saigon.

We did have a great deal of contact with Admiral Guyler, the Commander of CINCPAC, the U.S. naval headquarters for the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii, under whose military control we were. The Admiral and his predecessor visited us several times during my tenure. Relations were very cordial. When Admiral Guyler came, he came with 10 additional officers. Since I had a 200-man ceiling on our Mission, we had to put 10 of our people out of Cambodia in order to respect the letter and spirit of our commitment to Congress. The discussions we had with CINCPAC were especially useful as the time approached for our evacuation. When we left Phnom Penh on April 12, 1975, I took the American flag and the President's flag with me

slung over my left arm. Graham Martin also left with the American flag in his arms. For me, it was a last minute effort to shield the honour of our country.

When I returned to the States after our departure from Southeast Asia, I went to see the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Mr. Sparkman. The two flags I had taken out with me from Phnom Penh were given back to me. The Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee indicated to me at that meeting that the U.S. Mission in Phnom Penh had done a good job for the United States. Unfortunately, the Senator was not as kind with Ambassador Graham Martin. I felt that my colleague in Saigon had a more complex situation in Vietnam. I also know that in the closing days of our presence in Vietnam, Graham Martin was desperately trying to find a compromise solution. When he retired from the Foreign Service, he took a number of messages which could have cleared his name with him. One day, after retirement, these highly classified messages were found in the trunk of his car. Apparently, his car had a flat tire. He closed the car, left it on the side of the road, and walked a couple of hundred yards to a motel where he spent the night. He had hoped to find somebody at the motel to fix the flat next morning. During the night, people broke into his car and opened the trunk. To their disappointment, there was no money, nothing of value, just a sheath of messages which he had kept as a way of clearing his name. The next morning, these messages were strewn all over the countryside. I lost contact with Ambassador Graham Martin. He had a very distinguished career. But when things go wrong, politicians look for scapegoats.

I was more fortunate than Graham Martin. Few people criticized my tenure in Cambodia. Moreover, after our dramatic departure from Vietnam and

Cambodia, people in the U.S. wanted to move on and forget about Southeast Asia. I was very lucky. I was offered a wonderful next ambassadorial position: Denmark.

Before closing the chapter on Cambodia, I would like to relate what was for most of us one of the most tragic moments of our service in Cambodia: the departure from Phnom Penh.

Q: Before we get to that. I've got two questions. Was Graham Martin telling you to hang in there? Were you sharing your ideas of how to get the hell out of this situation by negotiations?

DEAN: He was very much aware of my long struggle for a controlled solution. He obviously had much better links to the White House and the State Department than I did. I was a first-time ambassador. He had been ambassador to some key countries like Italy, Argentina, and Thailand. He knew a lot of people in Washington who listened to him. I sent him a copy of some of our messages addressed to Washington so that he knew what we were thinking and doing. I also visited with him in Saigon.

While our jobs in the evacuation were similar, they were also very different. The number of people for whom our Mission was responsible was limited. In Saigon, that number was enormous. For reasons I cannot explain, people in the United States thought we had done the best possible job under incredibly difficult circumstances. Graham Martin and his team did not get the same reception. Perhaps our Mission in Saigon was under the impression that the U.S. would not walk away from its responsibilties in Vietnam. After all, when the French were loosing the war after the battle of Dien Bien Phu, the Geneva Conference of 1954 provided for an orderly. controlled ending of the war. Could anybody think that we would leave Vietnam by helicopter from the roof of our embassy? Graham Martin's job

was more difficult than mine. The evacuation of Phnom Penh had been planned with CINCPAC for many weeks. I am not sure that the same contingency plans were drawn up for Vietnam. In addition, in Saigon, the American Government was responsible for the safety of many more people than our Mission in Phnom Penh — American officials, plus private American citizens, more foreigners, more Vietnamese closely linked to the U.S... In Phnom Penh, we were able to move people over a number of weeks because we had empty DC-8s leaving every day Phnom Penh Airport for Thailand. This permitted us to move people out, and not wait for the last moment.

Q: Was it done quietly?

DEAN: It was well organised and those who needed to know how to avail themselves of U.S. assistance, knew how our system worked. Even Cambodians and foreigners in the outlying provincial enclaves knew about our daily shuttle service to Thailand. At the same time, Americans in the outlying districts came to Phnom Penh by helicopter and then flew by fixed wing aircraft to Thailand. In Phnom Penh, we had also sent all dependents out of Cambodia several weeks before the final evacuation.

Q: Our Mission in Saigon was doing some of the same. There was a period when we were even getting orphans out of Vietnam.

DEAN: We received the same request to evacuate Cambodian orphans and we complied with this request. They were moved to safety, but obviously they were only a small number compared to those who needed help. In the closing days of our presence in Cambodia, some events occurred in Southeast Asia which had an impact on our own decision-taking process. One of them was a difference of views with the Commander of CINCPAC, General Guyler, on how we would leave Phnom Penh. By that time, in March/April of 1975, the city

of Danang in Central Vietnam had fallen to the North Vietnamese. The photograph in the newspapers reflected the effort of some people to flee the city. It was bedlam. In Danang, many Vietnamese had close links to Americans. They wanted desperately to leave Danang because they feared that their very lives were in danger. As the North Vietnamese advanced on the city, some desperate Vietnamese tried to leave on departing aircrafts which were full up, by holding on the wings of the plane. Others tried to climb into boats which were over-loaded and were pushed off by those who were in the boats. Seeing those pictures of despair in the newspapers, I had suggested to Admiral Guyler that we should leave Phnom Penh not by fixed wing because the airport was about 4-5 miles out of town, but from a football field very near to the Embassy, in town, from where we would be extracted by helicopter. After a number of exchanges of cables and after the Admiral had come to Phnom Penh himself to survey the situation first hand, our view prevailed. Selecting the safest, nearest, and most convenient site as the staging area for our departure made a great deal of difference when push came to shove.

There was also a difference of views with Washington over who, we at Embassy-Phnom Penh, were responsible for. Obviously, all official and non-official Americans were eligible for evacuation. In reply to a query about which Cambodians should we take out, Washington suggested: Cambodians in the government and Cambodian military closely linked to the U.S. Also. all well-educated Cambodians who Washington felt (and rightly so) were a target for the Khmer Rouge once they came to power. Our Mission took exception to that cable, pointing out that anybody who had been working for Americans, Cambodian or third country national, whether he or she was illiterate or a Ph.D., was in danger. Our team agreed that "we would take everybody who wanted to go, whose life could be endangered."

We took gardeners, houseboys, Koreans working for our Mission, Cambodian Generals or Ministers, or educated Cambodians. One of them was a Cambodian atomic scientist who was still in Phnom Penh and who later went to work for the French Atomic Energy Commission outside of Paris. In short, we took people whose lives would be endangered when the Khmer Rouge came to power. I also sent helicopters into the provinces to bring back some members of the International Red Cross. Sixteen of them came back to Phnom Penh by U.S. helicopters. I went to see the Archbishop of Phnom Penh, At the beginning of the year, he believed that all clergy, nuns, monks, regard-less of nationality, would be safe. Some of the young French priests were not particularly supportive in their sermons of the American role in Cambodia. By the end of March 1975, I pleaded with the Archbishop to permit all Cambodian priests, nuns, monks, whose lives might be in danger, to leave with our planes for Thailand to await there developments. After a great deal of pleading, I was able to take out some 40 nuns and monks on the DC-8s to Thailand. The Cambodian Bishop of Phnom Penh refused to leave his flock and was among the first to be killed by the Khmer Rouge. Seven or eight years later, when His Holiness the Pope came to Thailand, where I was then the U.S. Ambassador, the same Archbishop (a Frenchman) accompanied the Pope on his trip. In front of the Pope, the former Archbishop of Cambodia — who had been my interlocutor in 1975 — fell into my arms and started sobbing and crying. Perhaps he had realized that back in 1975, he had waited too long in authorizing the evacuation of the Cambodian clergy and Christians. After the Paris Accords on Cambodia in the early 1990s, the same man was named again Archbishop of Cambodia. I can only assume that this very decent man was so horrified by what the Khmer Rouge did that he wanted to contribute to the moral and physical reconstruction of the Cambodian society in the 1990s. But the Archbishop

was not alone In his assessment of the consequences of a Khmer Rouge victory. There were quite a number of people - both Cambodian and foreigners - who believed that one could deal with the Khmer Rouge. In my opinion, you could only deal with them if you had something to negotiate with. The existence of a Cambodian army, navy, air force, and educated elite which was able to govern, and major foreign powers who could help on the international scene, would permit the Phnom Penh side to have sufficient weight to be taken seriously in a negotiation by the Khmer Rouge.

In February of 1975. we had sent our wives and all dependents of our Mission to Thailand. We also reduced the size of our staff in Cambodia. The evacuation from Phnom Penh, which went off without a hitch, was run by my good friend, Robert V. Keeley. Again, I would like to give him full credit for all he did for our embattled Mission. We were also on the telephone with Washington shouting "Help us: We are going under. We are going to leave this country unprotected." On the other end, on the telephone, was our old. dear friend, Assistant Secretary Phil Habib. The time of negotiation had run out but even Phil Habib could not convince Dr. Kissinger that the existing "fight on" policy was going to lead to a disaster. (Ambassador Keeley's Oral History gives some interesting details on that telephone call and subsequent telegram from Washington on this subject.)

Q: There was no doubt by then about when this was going to end?

DEAN: Certainly by the end of February and the first week of March, the Khmer Rouge were pressing hard. We used that time to move as many Cambodians, Americans, and foreigners as possible to safety in Thailand. We had set up a system imagined by Robert Keeley (DCM). Ray Perkins (Chief political Section), and Tim Carney, a junior officer who spoke Cambodian.

Tim became Ambassador later in his life. All those who felt endangered were sent out by plane over a period of 8 weeks before our departure. In addition, we had set up a procedure whereby key Cambodian leaders were told to send an assistant or secretary to the U.S. Embassy at 6:00 a.m. every day to find out the situation and decisions taken by us regarding taking people to safety. That system worked rather well when on this fateful day of April 12, 1975 we had decided to leave Phnom Penh by helicopter.

These aides and secretaries all came on the morning of April 12. One of them was the aide to Sirik Matak. We had prepared during the night a message stating that we were evacuating, and urging the recipient of the note to come along. In his reply to this message, Sirik Matak wrote one of the most heart-wrenching letters ever sent to an American official:

> Phnom Penh 12 April 1975
>
> Dear Excellency and Friend,
>
> I thank you very sincerely for your letter and for your offer to transport me towards freedom. I cannot, alas, leave in such a cowardly fashion. As for you, and in particular for your great country, I never believed for a moment that you would have this sentiment of abandoning a people which has chosen liberty. You have refused us your protection, and we can do nothing about it.
>
> You leave, and my wish is that you and your country will find happiness under this sky. But, mark it well, that if I shall die here on the spot and in my country that I love, it is too bad, because we all are born and must die (one day). I have only committed this mistake of believing in you the Americans.
>
> Please accept. Excellency and dear friend, my faithful and friendly sentiments.
>
> (signed) Sirik Matak

Basically, Long Nol was no longer in Cambodia. On April 1, 1975, Long Nol had left with his immediate family, via Indonesia, for Hawaii and had found refuge there. He died some years later a broken man.

Many people asked me whether Long Nol had stacked away millions of dollars in the United States? The answer is no. I think the Cambodian Central Bank had moved a few hundred thousand dollars in advance of Long Nol's departure, but it was not a huge amount. Originally, he had asked for a million dollars to be set aside for him in case of need, but to the best of my knowledge, at most $500,000 were transferred by the time he reached Hawaii.

By the time the end came to the Long Nol regime, Long Nol himself was handicapped. He already had suffered a stroke. For such a man, with wife and children, and retainers, the amount transferred by the Cambodian authorities was not a huge amount. He had fought for his idea, his vision of Cambodia, and had placed his trust -- like Sirik Matak -- in the United States. I do not find it appropriate for me to criticize a man who had many flaws, but he certainly tried to keep the country together against the Khmer Rouge, a policy we supported.

The story of the Prime Minister's ending is tragic. Long Boret refused to to be evacuated. He was a competent, able man. much younger than Long Nol or Sirik Matak. When I personally went to see him, on April 12, the very morning of our evacuation, to ask him to take his wife and himself and his young children out of Phnom Penh because I feared for his safety, he thanked me but thought his life was not in danger. In his mind, he had me many contacts among the Khmer Rouge with whom he had gone to lycee in Hanoi. That "old school tie" would save him, he believed. So, I said, "Give me your wife and your children." Again, he refused. I thought he was making a grievous mistake.

Long Nol's younger brother, a military officer, had actually gone to a site north of Phnom Penh to talk to the Khmer Rouge about an unopposed entry of

the Khmer Rouge into Phnom Penh. He was turned down. That man, so close to the Chief of State, was also under the impression that he could convince the Khmer Rouge to enter Phnom Penh peacefully.

Other members of the Embassy went to other Cambodian ministers in these fateful hours of April 12 to try to convince them to come along with us to safety. The American Marines who had come to secure the soccer field near the Embassy's Chancery did a magnificent job and made sure that all those who had found safety in the American Embassy — Americans. Cambodians, foreign nationals — could be taken to the waiting helicopters on the adjacent soccer field. The number of helicopters available was well beyond the number of people who showed up for evacuation.

Q: Where were they coming from?

DEAN: They were coming from town.

Q: I mean the helicopters.

DEAN: I think they were coming from Thailand and from U.S. aircraft carriers cruising off the coast of Cambodia. The job of the helicopters was to ferry all those who were leaving not directly to Thailand, but first on U.S. soil. That piece of U.S. soil were the American aircraft carriers on which we were to land. When I came back from Long Boret's house and the others had returned from seeing the other Cambodian dignitaries and generals, I realized that only one key Cambodian had asked for evacuation with us. It was General (retired) So Kam Koi, former President of the Senate, who had taken over as Chief of State on April 1, 1975, after Long Nol's departure. He came with his wife and

family and we ferried them to safety.

On that fateful day, I said to General Palmer that I wanted to be the last person to leave Cambodian soil. I felt like I was the captain of the ship and, as the tradition goes, the captain is the last man to leave the ship. My wish was granted. Awaiting to be called to move to the extraction site, I was sitting in my office, fully aware of the meaning of the moment for our country. I read the letter from Sirik Matak which had arrived about 45 minutes earlier. Looking out of the window, I saw the Marines taking people to the helicopters and to safety. I watched the Embassy personnel driving themselves to do all they could to help those who had thrown in their fate with us. Many had worked all night long drafting the letters which were delivered in the early hours of April 12, offering to take them to safety. Robert Keeley had drafted that letter. Nobody was turned down for evacuation, including at the last moment, Sidney Schanberg's Cambodian staffer working for the New York Times. We took foreign nationals out, for whom we had responsibility, or even if we had no responsibility. We did not distinguish between illiterate gardeners and highly educated intellectuals. We took the Cambodian girlfriends of some of our bachelor staff members out to safety. I asked our resident military and the Marines in charge of the evacuation to take out anybody who wanted to go with us. At one point in my office, I took a pair of scissors and cut the American flag and the President's flag off the staff of the poles which were in back of my desk in the ambassador's office. I was trying to figure out a way of giving some form of protection to the symbol of our country and to the people whom I represented in Cambodia. Tears were rolling off my cheeks. I was alone. I took the two flags and put them over my arm. I got some plastic so they would not get wet. Unkind newspaper people wrote that I had put the flags in a body bag for dead soldiers.

On our way to the helicopters, I stopped at my residence where the American flag was flying, and I struck the colors. I took the flag, the third flag, and put it with the other two flags. I asked the Cambodian staff at my residence whether they wanted to go with me. Some of them had been sent to safety before. Those who were still at the residence on April 12 thought they could stay behind without fearing for their safety. At that point, I abandoned the ambassadorial limousine and walked the rest of the way to the waiting helicopters with the American flags draped over my arm. As a Boy Scout in Kansas City, as an officer in the United States Army, and as a Foreign Service officer, I respected the Stars and Stripes as a symbol of our country. I was the last man in our Mission to leave Cambodia in a very large helicopter. One of the correspondents of an American broadcasting system sat next to me weeping because he understood what was going on. We landed on an American aircraft carrier. The entire extraction was called "Operation Eagle Pull". It was described at length in a Marine Corps magazine some years later.

As I landed on the deck of the aircraft carrier, the loudspeaker announced that "Operation Eagle Pull" was completed. I was asked to go into a large room and there I heard the President of the United States' voice speaking to me.

Q: This was Gerald Ford

DEAN: He praised all 200 Americans who had done their very best to uphold the dignity and reputation of the United States. Years later, a book was published, "Exit Without Honor". I had a hard time understanding those who only criticized those who represented the United States under very difficult circumstances. We all risked our lives and tried to serve to

the best of our abilities our country. The President of the United States, on the 14th of August 1975, months after the evacuation date of April 12, wrote the following letter;

> "Dear Mr. Ambassador,
>
> On behalf of the United States Government and the American people, I want to commend you and your staff for your valiant leadership and service in the successful evacuation of Americans from Phnom Penh. In reviewing the events surrounding the last few tragic months in Indochina, I can look with pride at your selflessness and devotion which are so appropriately in keeping with American sacrifices of the last decade. You were given one of the most difficult assignments in the history of the Foreign Service and carried it out with distinction. I know that all Americans join me in expressing our most sincere thanks and appreciation.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Gerald R. Ford"

We left the aircraft carrier by helicopter and landed on a military base in Thailand. There, I was reunited with my wife. She had been with the wife of General Palmer at an American base, waiting for us. In whatever I did in my professional life, I always had full support from my wife. We are now married half a century. I am grateful to her and to all those with whom I served in Cambodia under very difficult circumstances. Whatever honors and distinctions were bestowed on me during my service, it was in recognition of all those who served our country with distinction. The Cambodian experience was a wrenching experience for all of us who served there. Whether they were secretaries or generals, ambassadors or clerks, we stayed in contact for a long time.

After our evacuation. I was instructed to remain in Bangkok for three weeks, writing Efficiency Reports. All those who had served together in Cambodia — Americans and Cambodians — got together one last time on a

pleasure cruise boat in Bangkok to say goodbye. As the leader of the team of 200 people, I was asked to speak. I thanked them for what they had done and for the valiant service they had rendered to our country. I closed my remarks on that occasion with a quotation from Shakespeare's Hamlet - Act I, Scene 3. It is Polonius speaking to his son Laertes:

" This, above all: to thine own self be true
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not be false to any man.
Farewell, my blessing season this in thee!

This quotation became the leitmotif for the rest of my years in the Foreign Service.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point?

DEAN: Let's go and have lunch.

Q: We are back from a lunch break now. I've got a couple of questions I would like to ask you about your time in Cambodia. Did you feel that while you were dealing with the Cambodian problem, Watergate, the whole problem with Nixon and Congress, had an influence on our policy and efforts to get something done?

DEAN: I went at least once back to Washington. So did Robert Keeley, my deputy. We were all reading the newspapers of what was going on in the United States. The resignation of President Nixon was an important political factor. The Watergate scandal also meant that the focus of attention was domestic and there probably was not enough time or will to make a major shift in our policy toward Southeast Asia. There was some effort in Congress, in early 1975. to find money for Cambodia to continue the struggle. But that petered out when there was no strong support by the Executive Branch to get behind this alternative. Finally, military developments in Vietnam and in Cambodia made at the end the entire issue

theoretical. TIME HAD BEEN AGAINST OUR POLICY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

Q: What about dealings with the Cambodians? I am talking about the working level? Each type of country is different when you try to deal with the bureaucracy and all that.

DEAN: All of us on that team of 200 spoke pretty good French. The only way you could interact with all of them, except for Tim Carney who spoke Cambodian, was to speak French. All members of our team were able to interact very easily with their interlocutors, The Cambodians are nice people. Perhaps they are not quite as work-oriented as others. They enjoy having a little bit of fun from time to time. But most of the Cambodian military officers and officials we encountered were first rate and worked very hard. When you finance the whole war effort and prop up the whole regime, obviously, whatever you say makes an impact on your Cambodian counterpart. It was not difficult to have access to people since they needed you badly to carry out their effort to withstand the Khmer Rouge.

Q: Did you get involved in trying to find out what happened in 1972 when a number of American newspaper reporters who came in to follow the incursion into the Parrot's Beak had disappeared?

DEAN: Yes, there was a sustained effort to find these people. But by the time I assumed charge of the Embassy, in March 1974, we were not able to move around freely. The newspaper people probably ran into some Khmer Rouge, who saw spies everywhere, and they were liquidated by them. The Khmer Rouge believed in cleansing the Cambodian society from the scourge of western culture, and the western press was one element of that culture.

Q: I am told that at one time targets for their annihilation were people who wore glasses because this showed that they were enlightened.

DEAN: They had certain criteria for annihilation: anybody who was upper class; anybody who was educated; anybody who opposed levelling society... People threw away their glasses not to be associated with these elements of society. No Cambodian dared to speak French because that meant you had been exposed to a foreign culture. The Khmer Rouge were fanatics and in remodeling Cambodian society they did not take into account the cost on human life.

Q: Did you get any feel that this was the culmination of French socialist idealism or something like that?

DEAN: Khmer Rouge ideology and action went much farther than that French socialist idealists, Jean Jaures and people like him, were highly respectable.. The Khmer Rouge were revolutionaries, using violence, closer to the Bolsheviks who imposed themselves on Russian society in 1917 in order to impose a new political order and a new social order on their country. The Khmer Rouge were fanatical revolutionaries, and unfortunately some foreign observers, including Americans, did not see them in that light.

Q: What happened to people like Long Boret and Sirik Matak?

DEAN: Sirik Matak was killed on the 19th or 20th of April. The Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh on the 17th. Two days later, Sirik Matak was executed publicly, near the Grand Hotel in the center of Phnom Penh.

Q; Was it just out of hand?

DEAN: He was shot. Long Boret's ending was different. He thought he had "the old school tie" and he tried to find a way to ingratiate himself with the Khmer Rouge by saying that all Cambodians were part of the nationalist movement to rid themselves of foreign control. He found

that he and his views were completely rejected. Long Boret, in an effort to flee from the Khmer Rouge, drove with his family to the Phnom Penh airport in a jeep. At the same time, some military officers from the Long Nol regime were trying to take off in a helicopter to save their own skins. Long Boret tried to climb on the helicopter with his wife and young children. He was brutally shoved off the copter by Khmer military into the jeep. The helicopter took off and flew to safety. As for Long Boret and his family, the Khmer Rouge caught up with them and they were all assassinated.

Q: Let's move to... you spent several weeks in Bangkok.

DEAN: I was asked to write an evaluation on every officer. Also, Washington was going to be busy with the evacuation from Saigon at the end of April. For all these reasons, I was asked to stay in Bangkok for a few weeks longer.

Q: They wanted to keep you from...

DEAN: We left Phnom Penh on the 12th of April. On the 30th of April Saigon fell. I think Washington was involved, with CINCPAC, in making preparations for the much more difficult extraction from Saigon. Meanwhile, our team was kept busy in Bangkok, and out of the way of Washington. I also had to review the claims of all members of our team who claimed to have lost property in Cambodia. Some people came up with large bills. I lost one item for which I claimed something. I had a tapestry by Lurcat which I left behind. I put in a claim for that. In addition to looking after our American team, we had to be sure that the Cambodians we had taken out had enough rice for their stay in Bangkok.

My wife and I took to the Acting President of Cambodia, So kom Khoi, whole bags of rice so that they could survive while awaiting orders from Washington regarding their future, from time to time, we also shared some of our personal funds with our Cambodian friends so that they could take care of some urgent needs. Our team felt that we had a moral obligation to take care of those for whom we had taken responsibility by evacuating them with us. We continued doing these functions for about three weeks. As a matter of fact, to the credit of plain decency, some civilian food supplies (rice and dried legumes) left over from the Cambodian Aid Program were still in Bangkok. After April 12. when the Khmer Rouge had actually taken the city of Phnom Penh, the American authorities still parachuted some of the left-over supplies to the Cambodian civilian populations so that they would have something to eat.

I did not discuss enough the helpful, courageous role played by the NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) during all of my tenure in Cambodia. Some of the NGOs originally got their start in Indochina. Congress was willing to help these NGOs, but the NGOs themselves had to collect funds on their own. Among the NGOs in Cambodia. we had World Vision, Care, Catholic Relief Services, and many others. In previous chapters, I had already praised the unselfish, noble manner in which these various humanitarian organizations helped the suffering civilian populations. One humanitarian organization which always plays a special role in time of conflict is the International Committee of the Red Cross whose headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland. ICRC. as it is commonly referred to, helps both sides in a conflict. For example, they exchange prisoners. They do many jobs nobody else can do. The ICRC members were active and stationed all over Cambodia, including in Khmer Rouge controlled areas.

In the closing days of our presence in Cambodia, I asked the top ICRC official whether any of them wanted to return to the capital, Phnom Penh, in case of future evacuation, We did send at their request American helicopters into the provinces to pick up those who wanted to return to Phnom Penh. Eighteen ICRC members availed themselves of that offer. As you know from the book or movie "The Killing Fields", after the American Embassy evacuated Phnom Penh, the French Embassy acted as a haven for anybody who had stayed behind and feared the Khmer Rouge. It was only at that time, after our departure from Phnom Penh and before the French took out the last group at the end of April, that some critics of the U.S. realized that the Khmer Rouge were not a bunch of "agricultural Reformers" but brutal revolutionaries dedicated to remodeling Cambodian society. Shortly after the Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh on April 17, they started to vacate the city of its population. Old and young, male and female, walked for miles to new destinations selected by the Khmer Rouge. Some people in hospital beds were forced to leave Phnom Penh; many of them died and their beds were abandoned on the road. Many old people collapsed on the way. Those foreigners who had not left with the U.S. evacuators took refuge at the French Embassy run by the Charge d'Affaires. Many U.N. people and foreign humanitarian workers found temporary safety at the French Embassy between April 12 and 30. Some Cambodians also took refuge at the French Embassy. The accommodations for these hundreds of safety seekers were rudimentary but the French did their best to cope with the influx of people.— beds on the floor, basic food to survive... One day. a Khmer Rouge official came to the French Embassy, which by that time looked like a refugee camp, and asked: "Do you have any Cambodian citizens? If you do, they must be declared and given up to us." I do not want to go into detail, but I heard from my

French friends who were at the French Embassy during these fateful days, that humans react differently when their own lives are at stake. One European gave up his Cambodian girlfriend in order just to save himself and not endanger others. To the best of my knowledge, the French convoy left for Thailand from Phnom Penh at the end of April, We had left on the 12th, Sid Schanberg was one of those who got out with the French. He had to deny his American identity when their trucks were stopped by the Khmer Rouge on the way to Thailand. He said that he was French, and his beret on his head and a gauloise between his lips probably made his claim ring true. Some Cambodians in the French convoy gave themselves off as French. The French authorities had given them papers in order to document them as French citizens. This way, they had French protection. While in Phnom Penh, in the French Embassy, if a Cambodian was turned over to the Khmer Rouge, he or she had a good chance of being eliminated. One Cambodian lady had a coke bottle broken off in her vagina. Most of those who had found refuge in the French Embassy got out to safety. A few foreigners stayed behind, but they soon were disillusioned and left via Thailand.

Q: You mentioned, off the mike, an incident while you were still in Cambodia with the Israeli Embassy.

DEAN: As we had the DC-8s coming to Phnom Penh every day during the last six to eight weeks, bringing food and ammunition, on the return trip, these planes were empty. People for whom I had responsibility who wanted to leave Cambodia could come to a certain American office in Phnom Penh to obtain documentation for a flight to Thailand. We had responsibility for some 12-15 nationalities and certain Cambodians closely linked to the U.S. From Thailand, these evacuees had to find their own way to wherever they wanted to go. The standing order for all those to be evacuated by U.S.

Government aircraft was the same for all: Two suitcases per traveler. That order applied to Americans, Cambodians, and other nationalities, including our closest allies (NATO members, Australians, etc.).

Q: Including the Soviets?

DEAN: I took one Soviet journalist out, but I had no formal responsibility for him. The Israeli Ambassador, whose first name was Shimon (Simon), came to me and said fairly early in April; "We would like you to take out our coding equipment. It's about 1,000 kilos." I said: "Shimon, I really can't help you." Israel had a large technical assistance program in Cambodia. "Any one of your technicians and embassy staff who wants to leave can take two large suitcases along. If you put some pieces of the coding equipment into these suitcases, then you can get much of it out." Shimon said; "You are not really very helpful, I'll see about that." I guess he sent a message back to Washington saying: "The Ambassador is not very helpful. The Israeli Embassy has coding equipment which we have to get out and Dean did not want to take it." Next day, I received a message from Washington: "John, why are you difficult with the Israeli Ambassador and his request to take out their coding equipment." I sent back a message to the Secretary: "Mr. Secretary. I am giving the Israeli Embassy and its staff the same treatment I have applied to all Americans and our closest allies who are still in Cambodia: two suitcases per person as they get on the U.S. plane leaving for Thailand. If you want me to give preferential treatment to the Israeli Embassy, please let me know, and I will comply." I never received an answer to that message. As a result. the 1.000 kilos of the Israeli Embassy were left behind, near the Phnom Penh airfield, and never got out. I might tell how we handled our own encrypting and coding equipment. We put grenades in the machines and the

equipment was destroyed by explosion. We did not have the time to take the coding equipment out because we sent messages until shortly before our departure. Hence, in the last minutes, we destroyed our equipment by explosives, as instructed by Washington.

Q: Did you have any problem destroying files, or was that done way ahead of time?

DEAN: That was done very early. The files and security equipment were destroyed days before the evacuation. The departure from Phnom Penh was orderly because we had six/eight weeks of 6/8 daily plane flights from Phnom Penh to Thailand, which permitted us to plan and draw down over a certain period of time. We were amazed that, on April 12, not more Cambodians wanted to leave. For eight weeks we had been taking people out from Cambodia, so people who really felt very insecure had been able to leave before our final departure. Others lived under the illusion that they could survive under Khmer Rouge takeover.

Q: In May 1975, you came back to Washington?

DEAN: I came back to Washington. I presented myself to the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and many other members of Congress. The legislators were very cordial in these meetings and the Executive Branch assured me that I would get another ambassadorial assignment. I was told to take a good vacation because I needed it after these stressful months. I went to Switzerland, took my family on a trip to Italy and showed them Rome, Venice, Florence, Siena, and other cultural sites of the West. By telephone, I was told that I was under consideration for an ambassadorial assignment: either Morocco or Romania. At that

point, I was more Interested in getting some of my weight back than in future assignments. I had lost more than 15 pounds by the time I came out of Cambodia. One day I received a phone call from Larry Eagleburger, Under Secretary for Management, who said: "John, there is a change of plans. We would like you to go to Copenhagen. Come and see us in Washington." In Washington, I was told that the Embassy in Copenhagen had become available. This was a post mostly reserved for political appointees. Hence, I was one of the first Foreign Service career officers to go to Denmark. I suggested to the State Department I would like to learn Danish. Since I was fluent in German, had a smattering of Dutch, I was confident I could learn basic Danish in a relatively short time. Above all, I was trying to find a way to show to decision makers that having a career Foreign Service Officer at a post could make a difference to our foreign policy. Speaking the language of the host country was a step in the right direction. I was sent to the Foreign Service Institute in Washington and learned a few phrases in Danish before leaving for Copenhagen. When I arrived in Copenhagen airport, the local press was waiting for me and I gave my first statements to the press in Danish. Since Denmark never had an American ambassador before who even tried to speak Danish, the local media was, on the whole, very kind to me during my tenure.